

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

2000 Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



January 28, 2005

Ms. Sharon Fujii, Regional Administrator
Administration for Children and Families
Department of Health and Human Services
Region IX
50 United Nations Plaza
San Francisco, California 94102

**SUBJECT: QUARTERLY REPORT FOR QUARTER ENDING DECEMBER
30, 2004 OF CALIFORNIA'S PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

Dear Ms. Fujii:

In accordance with 45 CFSR 1355.35 9(d) (4), we are submitting the sixth quarterly report for California's Program Improvement Plan (PIP) for the quarter ending December 31, 2004.

Consistent with your recommendation, we are enclosing a document that summarizes the state's progress in implementing the PIP. It is our intent that this document will provide a brief summary of the current status of each item that may not be obvious in reviewing the PIP matrix which provides information on a myriad of tasks. We have also included a highlights document, which points out some of the accomplishments during the past quarter, such as the progress the State has made in several areas of the PIP, especially in some of the outcome measures.

We hope you will find the enclosed information useful in providing details on some of the tasks that the State has been working on over the past quarter. Should you have any questions about the quarterly report, please contact me at (916) 657-3546 or Wesley A. Beers, Chief, Operations and Evaluation Branch at (916) 651-8111.

Sincerely,

BRUCE WAGSTAFF
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division

Enclosures

HIGHLIGHTS FOR OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2004 QUARTERLY REPORT

Performance Improvement Targets

California is pleased to report our progress toward meeting the terms of the PIP as of the end of the sixth quarter. Based on our State analysis of the 25 performance measures in the PIP we have; achieved our performance goal in seven items and partially achieved the goal in two other items, shown improvement in four items and portions of three others, are on track to achieve our goals in 8 systemic items and are showing a decline in performance in three items and a portion of one other item. Of the items showing a decline we are currently analyzing the data trends to determine any additional actions that may be needed above and beyond our current PIP commitments. Of special note, we believe we are on track to successfully meet all of our performance targets for the five Systemic Factors.

Additionally, we have reviewed the status of all the action steps required as part of the PIP and have determined that we have either completed or are on track to complete all the action steps agreed to in the approved revised PIP by June 30, 2005.

System Change

The new Outcome and Accountability system is on track for full implementation. This outcomes-based review system measures, tracks, and monitors counties on an ongoing basis, and gives California unprecedented access to critical information regarding children and families. It is providing the state and counties with substantially improved program information and an opportunity to critically assess the system's strengths and areas for improvement. Counties have embraced this new system, and all 58 counties have spent considerable time and effort in analyzing their data profiles and drafting their self-assessments and system improvement plans. We are now in the process of reviewing these 58 plans in depth, and are utilizing the information to provide more targeted technical assistance to improve safety, permanency and well-being outcomes. Thirteen counties have been scheduled for Peer Quality Case Reviews that will be completed by June 30, 2005.

On December 14, 2004, All County Letter (ACL) #04-57 was issued implementing the monthly caseload statistical reporting by Probation Departments. A second ACIN detailing the implementation of the Outcomes and Accountability System for Probation Departments is in draft form and will be issued during the next quarter. The CDSS and the Chief Probation Officers of California have identified the five regions for upcoming training on the new FC 23 (Monthly Statistical Report). Training will be conducted in February/March 2005 in each of the regions. This statistical reporting will further enhance the state's understanding of how child welfare services are delivered to probation youth. Similar to the Quarterly County Data Reports, this information will be submitted to each county probation department as part of the Outcomes and Accountability System for review, analysis, and planning. It is anticipated that as the data becomes more available probation departments will be able to identify specific

strengths and weaknesses that will be included in county Self Assessments and System Improvement Plans.

The Standardized Safety Assessment System Workgroup is on track to meet the 2005 goals. A system framework has been developed indicating intervention points throughout the life of a case (from referral to closure) when safety should be assessed and considered. At each point, the purpose and desired outcome of the intervention has been identified. This model has now been forwarded for review and approval. The next meeting will turn the focus of the workgroup toward implementation and further discussion of a training strategy.

Making Investments and Improvements in the Child Welfare System

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger unveiled his budget for FY 2005-06, with full funding, including caseload growth for the Child Welfare Services (CWS) program. Also included in the FY 2005-06 budget for the CWS program was \$26.6 million augmentation to implement the CWS system improvements of differential response, the standardized safety system and permanency and youth services. A portion of the \$26.6 million, \$14.1 million has specifically been designated for 11 additional counties (for a total of 22) to implement the CWS system improvements of differential response, the standardized safety system and permanency enhancements.

Los Angeles County

Los Angeles County has also made significant progress and taken a strong lead in focusing its efforts to improve outcomes and implement system changes. This is especially significant given that Los Angeles County has approximately half of California's foster youth. The Permanency Partnership Program (P3) is a partnership with the Consortium for Children (under a contract that the Consortium has with CDSS for Adoption Mediation). This program provides a "Permanency Partner" (trained adoption mediator) to a foster youth with the goal of establishing one or more adult connections -often times someone the youth knows or knew in the past--with the goal of reunifying the youth with his family or moving the child out of long term foster care and into adoption or legal guardianship. If there is no existing connection that can be identified, a search for a family to adopt is initiated. As a last resort, if legal permanency cannot be established, they are ensuring the youth is connected to an adult mentor who will commit to working with the youth through early adulthood.

The county has also focused its improvement efforts on reducing the backlog of adoption home studies. As of December 2004, Los Angeles County has completed 2,049 of the 2,085 adoption home studies that were pending as of June 16, 2003. Barriers to the completion of the remaining 36 home studies have been identified and are being resolved within the county.

The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) continue to collaborate with the County's Department of Mental Health (DMH) to improve mental

health services to children in foster care. The DCFS Medical Director and other senior managers from DCFS and DMH now meet weekly to address many cross-system issues. Together they have developed protocols to better improve access to services.

Training

Technical assistance and training for judges continues under the provisions of the Judicial Review and Technical Assistance (JRTA) contract. The contract has been amended and an additional JRTA staff attorney hired to enable the JRTA team to provide additional training regarding concurrent planning, reassessment of permanency and termination of parental rights. The JRTA team has prioritized this additional training to focus initial efforts on the 10 largest counties. The team will use individualized county data and the county SIPs to tailor the training to individual county needs.

The State training contractor conducted 11 training sessions on correctly opening and closing cases in CWS/CMS. The CDSS has provided instructions on identifying the data fields used to determine various outcome measures, so the counties can monitor to ensure accurate data entry by staff. The information has been posted on the CWS/CMS Project website. Similar training has been developed and is currently being offered through the Northern Training Lab Consortium (NTLC) and Central Academy.

The State has utilized information obtained regarding current training practices, training needs and input from stakeholders to address the goals and objectives of the CFSR in developing a statewide common core curriculum that will be used to train all child welfare workers. Throughout the process of surveying members of the Statewide Training Education Committee and the Curriculum Development Oversight Group (CDOG) have shared the counties and developing the curriculum, best practices. This has further helped to promote statewide consistency and foster good working relationships. The core curriculums will be piloted before June 2005.

The "Case Plan That Leads to Permanency" curriculum for juvenile probation officers is completed and will be presented in six training sessions that are scheduled throughout the state during the first quarter of 2005.

Other Items

The first workgroup meeting to explore existing practice and reporting processes used by social workers to report abuse in out-of-home care was held on November 4, 2004. This was followed by two conference calls. The meeting participants were staff from CDSS, CWDA, County and Community Care Licensing. The focus of the meeting was to identify existing regulations, procedures and process for recording data on CWS/CMS. The workgroup analyzed regulations, procedures and process data collection. Instructions for entering data were revised to improve identified data anomalies. A query was developed to determine the volume of data recorded under the revised process. We believe the issuance of new instructions will increase accuracy of

data entry in this area. A draft All County Letter was presented to the committee on December 14, 2004 and will be issued in February 2005.

Strategies for ensuring fairness and equity into key decision points have been released in an ACIN. ACIN I-75-04 has been approved by the Department and is currently being printed and distributed. The content is based on the Fairness and Equity Matrix developed by the CWS Stakeholders Group and Redesign, and includes elements of the National Resource Center on Permanency Planning Report to California and the June 2003 U.C. Berkeley Symposium on Fairness and Equity.